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ABSTRACT

Introducing children to well written and beautifully illustrated books will help build basic skills while providing for the aesthetic need for beauty and pleasure. This lesson is designed as an integrated literature and visual arts lesson, revolving around the story book, "Owl Moon," written by Jane Yolen and illustrated by John Schoenherr--the book won the Caldecott Medal in 1988. The lesson explains that the story describes a young child's adventure on a snowy winter evening searching for owls. According to the lesson, the intention is to have the book serve as an inspiration for an arts exploration that allows children to create a watercolor painting inspired by Schoenherr's illustrations. The lesson offers an overview; suggests a length and grade level; lists subjects and subtopics; cites dimensions of learning and intelligences being addressed; notes equipment and materials needed; lists teacher resources; and addresses National Standards for Arts Education. It identifies instructional objectives and strategies; provides a detailed, step-by-step instructional plan; and suggests assessment and extension activities. Contains 5 teacher references and a scoring rubric. (NKA)

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Curricula, Lessons and Activities

An Owl in the Woods

Resource Type: lesson

Length: 60-90 min

Grade: 3

Subjects: Language Arts, Visual Arts

Subtopics: Literature, Painting

Intelligences Being Addressed:
- Interpersonal Intelligence
- Intrapersonal Intelligence
- Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence
- Visual/Spatial Intelligence

Dimensions of Learning:
- Acquisition and integration of knowledge
- Attitudes and perceptions about learning
- Extension and refinement of knowledge
- Meaningful use of knowledge
- Productive habits of the mind

Overview: Introducing children to well-written and beautifully illustrated books will help build basic skills while providing for the aesthetic need for

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beauty and pleasure. This lesson is an integrated literature and visual arts lesson revolving around the story *Owl Moon*, beautifully told by author Jane Yolen and lavishly illustrated by John Schoenherr. This book won the Caldecott Medal in 1988. The story describes a young child's adventure on a snowy winter evening searching for owls. This book will serve as the inspiration for an arts exploration that allows children to create a watercolor painting inspired by the illustrations of John Schoenherr.

Equipment:

- Audio Recorder: (optional)
- Computer Mac or PC with Internet access

Media & Materials:

- Book *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen ,

Printouts: This lesson has printouts. They are referenced in the "Student Supplies" or "Other Materials" sections below.

Student Supplies: Writing material for written responses; and

Watercolor painting supplies (have these set up and ready for distribution to students):

- Good quality paper (heavy construction paper or watercolor paper)
- Good brushes
- Water color paint or tempera paint that is thinned so that it washes over the paper (colors: dark blue, white, black, brown, and yellow)
- Newspaper to cover desks or tables
- A water dish (margarine tub) for every two students
- A paper towel for each student
- A paper plate for each student
- Rags to catch the spills
- Coffee cans or buckets to soak brushes

Other Materials:

- Scoring Rubric handout
- (Optional) Cassette tape: *Peterson Field Guides: Western Birding By Ear: A Guide to Bird-Song Identification*, by

Richard K. Walton and Robert W. Lawson. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. 1990. ("Great Horned Owl" is on Cassette 1. This is a big expense for just one bird call; however, you may want to contact your local National Audobon Society. Members may be able to help you with a loan for a short period.

Related Textbooks: None

Teacher Internet Resources:

Lesson and Extension Specific Resources:

- **Randolph Caldecott Medal Homepage**
  http://www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.html

  This site is the primary source for information on the Caldecott Medal for Children's Literature. The site is maintained by the Association for Library Service to Children.

- **The Owl Pages**
  http://www.owlpages.com/

  This Web site hosts many different educational links for the study of owls, such as an art gallery of owls, information on the physiology of owls, and descriptions of owls all over the world.

General Internet Resources:

- **Kids on the Web: Children's Books**
  http://www.zen.org/~brendan/kids-lit.html

  Kids on the Web offers a full range of information, from the home pages of children's authors and some recommended books, to a selection of children's writings. There is also a link to the Children's Literature Web Guide on this page.

- **WatercolorPainting.Com**
  http://www.watercolorpainting.com/wcpindex.htm

  The site offers tips, instructions, and insights. New products are offered, lessons/competitions posted, and resources

are made available to individuals interested in learning to paint with watercolors.

National Standards for Arts Education:

- K-4 Visual Art Content Standard 1 : Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
- K-4 Visual Art Content Standard 3 : Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
- K-4 Visual Art Content Standard 4 : Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
- K-4 Visual Art Content Standard 5 : Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others
- K-4 Visual Art Content Standard 6 : Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

Click here for additional information on the National Standards for Arts Education

Other National Standards:

Source of Standards:

For more on the Standards in other subjects, please refer to the Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory (McREL) website.

State Standards, if any:

To search the State Arts Standards, please visit the National Conference of State Legislatures website.

Instructional Objectives:

Artistic Perception:
Each student will gain a greater awareness of how words and illustrations can work together to create a feeling or setting. They will explore how the use of high contrast colors can create the impression of a winter forest at night.

Creative Expression:
Each student will respond to the story and class discussion with the design and creation of their own watercolor painting of a winter forest. Written responses may include poetry or other creative expressions of the concepts of the lesson.

Cultural and Historical Context:

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Through direct teacher instruction and whole-group discussion, students will learn about the author and illustrator of *Owl Moon*, and will discuss what inspired them to create the book.

Aesthetic Valuing:
Students will reflect on the feelings they expressed in their paintings and the particular arrangement of light and dark in their paintings. They will understand the effect of using light and dark areas to create a feeling or setting, and express whether the painting is aesthetically pleasing to them. Students will also view the paintings made by the entire group and interpret the feelings that at least one painting conveys.

Strategies:

- Group instruction
- Group discussion
- Guided discovery

Instructional Plan:

VOCABULARY

- *Contrast*—to show differences between objects
- *High value*—a color that has much white added to it, or a work of art that has much light in it
- *Illustrate*—to draw a picture that shows something or tells a story
- *Low value*—a color that has much black added to it or a work of art that has more darkness than lightness in it
- *Motif*—theme or subject
- *Owling*—to go into the forest at night to watch for owls
- *Watercolor*—paints that have a watery, flowing color.

PROCEDURES

Introduction:

If you have a reading carpet in your classroom, you may want complete this activity in this space. Hold up the cover to the book *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolan. Tell them that you are going to read this story to them. Ask them to look at the cover and consider the book's title. Ask them what they think the book will be about. Take several responses. It is likely that they will state that the story involves winter, snow, cold, owls, night time, and the moon. Ask them if they have ever taken a walk through the snow on a winter

evening. If any have, ask them how they felt.

Have students stand up in their own personal space and pretend that they "feel" the room growing colder and darker. Have them pretend to slip on heavy winter coats and be sure to fasten them up. Next, have them pull on woolen hats, scarves, and mittens. Remind them the snow in the woods is at least several inches deep. Have them pull on heavy boots.

While they remain in place, tell students to go for a walk in the cold winter woods, goose-stepping through the snow, and listening for the slightest sound. Tell them to watch the moon rise and the snow glisten. Transport them magically back to their warm and cozy classroom and have them be seated.

Have them listen carefully for words in the story that help them get the feeling of being in the woods on a wintry night. Tell them you will show them the pictures as you read. Ask them also to think about how the illustrator helps us "see" the snowy woods. Read the story and show the pictures as you go along.

Pupil Activity Sequence:

1. Ask students what words they heard that made them feel like they were in the wintry setting of the story. Reread pages as needed to help students remember. Write these on the board. Ask them how Ms. Yolen used words to help us experience the feeling of the scene.
2. Ask them which characters were in the book. Which character was telling the story? What could they tell from the story? Was owling a special privilege? What sound did the owl make? (Optional: use of owl call on cassette tape.) What words did the character use to tell us that owling was special? In a way, Ms. Yolen used words to paint a picture of the wintry forest and the characters that we meet there. Ms. Yolen and her family live in rural Massachusetts. Her husband, David Stemple, used to take their three children, Heidi, Adam, and Jason, **owling** on winter nights. It was her fond memories of these special evenings that inspired her to write this story.
3. Have them now look at the illustrations in the book. The illustrator, John Schoenherr, loves nature. He agreed to **illustrate** the story of *Owl Moon* because he used to take his own children, Jennifer and Ian, owling on his family farm. The Schoenherr family farm is featured in the **watercolor** illustrations we see in *Owl Moon*, as the book

jacket states, "the shadowed trees and trails are landmarks past which he and his family trudged on winter nights searching for the magnificent and elusive owl." The **motif**, or theme, of his illustrations was the winter forest.

4. Explain to your students that Mr. Schoenherr used watercolor paintings to compliment Ms. Yolen's words. Together, the words and pictures help us step into the story and walk alongside the characters on their search for the owl. Revisit the illustrations with the children and look at the way Mr. Schoenherr has used color to show us the shadows and moonlight of the woods. We describe a work of art that has more darkness than lightness in it as **low value**. Paintings containing a large degree of lightness are called **high value**. The sharp difference between the light and dark areas of the illustrations is called **contrast**. Post the vocabulary words so students can refer to them during the lesson.
5. Tell students that they will be creating their own watercolor painting inspired by the illustrations of John Schoenherr. Demonstrate how to load the paint on the wet brush and stroke across the paper with dark blue and black to create the shadows. Black and brown can be used to create the trees and figures of the characters and the owl. Swipes of white can be used to highlight the places where snow is in direct moonlight. Demonstrate how to clean the brushes in order to change colors.
6. Once you have completed your demonstration, have students line up to get their materials or pass materials out to them. Remind them to begin with the background. Allow the students adequate time to complete their paintings.

Closure:

Ask students to think about and respond to the following questions (You may want to post these questions for the whole class to review and/or require a journal for student to write responses):

1. Pretend that your painting is going to be sold through a museum catalog. Write a title and a short description of your painting for the museum catalog.
2. What feelings are you trying to convey in your painting?
3. Are you pleased with your painting?
4. Why did you choose this arrangement of shapes and colors?
5. In what ways did Jane Yolen use words to help us feel that we were owling in the winter woods?

6. In what ways did John Schoenherr use watercolor illustrations to help us feel that we were owling in the winter woods?

Each student should clean up around his or her own work area. Brushes should be placed with the bristle side down in a coffee can of water. Assigned students will collect materials and store, clean, or discard as directed.

Assessment:

Evaluation will occur by direct teacher observation during the lesson. The teacher will also consider student participation and comments during whole group discussion at the introduction of the lesson and during the examination of peer paintings. Paintings will be assessed on whether they show a contrast of light and dark areas in a woodland setting.

Assessment will also consist of student writing, including the title and catalog description for the painting. This writing will address how the particular painting conveys the feeling of winter cold, contrasting light. Best student writing will include an accurate reference to the vocabulary introduced in the lesson. The teacher may also wish to have students respond formally to the feelings generated by the painting of a classmate.

Additional assessment can be found on the Scoring Rubric handout.

Extensions:

Hang student paintings around the classroom. Have all students go around the classroom and view the artworks created by his/her classmates. Ask them to pick one painting to examine very closely. Have them think about the ways that the student used dark and light colors to show us the feeling of a winter forest.

This lesson can be adapted to nearly any grade level.

The following are additional suggestions for ways to extend the lesson:

- You can include an owl pellet dissection if you want to make science connections. Written instructions are located in the Project Wild curriculum guide. Contact the California Department of Fish and Game for information on Project Wild guides and workshops.
- Use music to set the mood of winter and cold.

- Ask students to act out the owling adventure, showing what it is like to walk through deep snow in the cold and the dark. Have them listen for owls.
- Have students write one or more paragraphs on what they have learned about the author and illustrator. These folks both have other wonderful children's books. Have students find and share one of these other titles.
- Have students create poems inspired by their paintings and the story *Owl Moon*.

Teacher References:

1. *Literacy and the Arts for the Integrated Classroom: Alternative Ways of Knowing.* Cecil, Nancy Lee, and Phyllis Lauritzen. New York: Longman. 1994.
2. *The Arts as Meaning Makers: Integrating Literature and the Arts Throughout the Curriculum.*Cornett, Claudia E. Ohio: Merrill. 1999.
3. *The Young Artist's Handbook.* Hodge, Anthony. New York: Shooting Star Press. 1995.
4. *Let's Meet Famous Artists: A Creative Art Activity Book.* Kinghorn, Harriet, Jacqueline Badman, and Lisa Lewis-Spicer. Minnesota: T.S. Dennison & Company. 1991.
5. *Owl Moon.* Yolen, Jane. New York: Philomel Books. 1988.

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ARTSEDGENotes:

Rose James

An Owl in the Woods
Scoring Rubric

Features	Strong	Adequate	Needs Work
Participation in class discussion	Full participation in opening activity. Attention focused fully on class discussion. Contributed two or more ideas to discussion, or asked a question, or made a positive comment about a contribution made by another student during discussion.	Full participation in opening activity. Attention focused on class discussion. At least one of the following during discussion: idea, question, positive comment in response to the contribution of another student during discussion.	Little or no participation in opening activity. Attention wandered during discussion. No comments made, or comments off topic or redundant.
Creation of watercolor paining	Painting reflects the concepts discussed and demonstrated in lesson. Artwork employs high contrast between areas of high and low values. Painting shows winter forest scene. Effective use of watercolor technique.	Painting reflects some of the concepts discussed and demonstrated in the lesson. Artwork shows some contrast between areas of high and low values. Painting depicts winter forest scene. Student may be struggling a bit with watercolor technique.	Painting shows minimal use of concepts introduced in the lesson. Painting does not depict winter forest scene. Painting shows evidence that student is having significant difficulty with watercolor technique.
Student writing (Catalog description and reflection on own painting.)	Catalog description includes a complete paragraph written at grade level. Students use vocabulary introduced in the lesson. Response is reflective and detailed.	Catalog description includes a brief paragraph written at grade level. Students use some vocabulary introduced in the lesson. Response somewhat reflective.	Catalog description is less than a third grade paragraph. Little or no vocabulary from the lesson is used, or, is used incorrectly. Little or no reflective response, or response is off-target.

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